

Question: "What are some of the signs of genuine saving faith?"

Answer: This is one of the most important questions in the Christian life. Many believers doubt their salvation because they don't see signs of genuine faith in their lives. There are those who say we should never doubt our decision to follow Christ, but the Bible encourages us to examine ourselves to see if we are truly "in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Thankfully, God has given us ample instruction for how we can know for sure that we have eternal life. The first epistle of John was actually written for that purpose, as it states in 1 John 5:13, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

There are a series of tests in 1 John that we can use to examine ourselves and our faith. As we look at them, remember that no one will perfectly fulfill all of them all the time, but they should reveal a consistent trend that characterizes our lives as we grow in grace.

1. Do you enjoy having fellowship with Christ and His redeemed people? (1 John 1:3)
2. Would people say you walk in the light, or walk in the darkness? (1 John 1:6-7)
3. Do you admit and confess your sin? (1 John 1:8)
4. Are you obedient to God's Word? (1 John 2:3-5)
5. Does your life indicate you love God rather than the world? (1 John 2:15)
6. Is your life characterized by "doing what is right"? (1 John 2:29)
7. Do you seek to maintain a pure life? (1 John 3:3)
8. Do you see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life? (1 John 3:5-6) [Note: this refers to not continuing in sin as a way of life, not a total absence of sin.]
9. Do you demonstrate love for other Christians? (1 John 3:14)
10. Do you "walk the walk," versus just "talking the talk"? (1 John 3:18-19)
11. Do you maintain a clear conscience? (1 John 3:21)
12. Do you experience victory in your Christian walk? (1 John 5:4)

If you are able to truthfully answer "Yes" to these questions (or a majority of them, and are working on the others), then your life is bearing the fruit of true salvation. Jesus said that it is by our fruits that we are known as His disciples (Matthew 7:20). Fruitless branches—professing believers who do not display the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) are cut off and thrown into the fire (John 15:2). A genuine faith is one that not only believes in God (the devils themselves do that - James 2:19), but leads to open confession of sin and obedience to Christ's commands. Remember, we are saved by grace through faith, not by our works (Ephesians 2:8-9), but our works should display the reality of our salvation (James 2:17-18). Genuine saving faith will always produce works; a faith that is perpetually without works is no faith at all and saves no one.

In addition to these confirmations, we need to remember God's promises and the reality of the war we are in. Satan is just as real as Jesus Christ, and he is a formidable enemy of our souls. When we turn to Christ, Satan will look for every opportunity to deceive and defeat us. He will try to convince us that we are unworthy failures or that God has given up on us. When we are in Christ, we have the assurance that we are kept by Him. Jesus Himself prayed for us in John 17:11 that the Father would "...keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." Again in verse 15, He prayed, "keep them from the evil." In John 10:27-29, Jesus said "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." If you hear and obey the voice of Jesus, then you are one of His sheep, and He will never let you go. Jesus gave a wonderful word picture here of Christians securely held within His loving hands and the Father's almighty hands wrapping themselves around His, giving us a double assurance of eternal security.

Question: "If you doubt your salvation, does that mean you are not truly saved?"

Answer: Everyone has occasional doubts. Whether or not you have doubts is not what determines whether you are a Christian. Even when a believer is faithless, God is faithful (2 Timothy 2:13). God wants us to be sure and confident of our salvation (Romans 8:38-39; 1 John 5:13). God promises that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ will be saved (John 3:16; Romans 10:9-10). We have all sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). As a result, we deserve death and an eternity apart from God (Romans 6:23). But God loved us enough to die in our place, taking the punishment that we deserved (Romans 5:8). As a result, all those who believe are saved and eternally secure.

Sometimes doubting is a good thing. Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians 13:5 "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith;..." We are to test ourselves to be sure that Jesus is truly our Savior and the Holy Spirit is truly in us. If He is, we can in no way lose the salvation Christ has obtained for us (Romans 8:38-39). If He's not, then perhaps the Holy Spirit is convicting us of sin and prompting us to repent and be reconciled to God through Christ. The assurance of our salvation comes from the knowledge that once we are in Christ, we are eternally secure. But genuine saving faith is evidenced by its works (James 2:14-26) and the fruit of the Spirit within us (Galatians 5:22). The lack of this evidence can sometimes be the cause of our doubts.

Have you placed your faith in Christ? If the answer is yes, then throw away your doubts and trust God. If you know Jesus as your Savior, you are saved without a doubt! If the answer is no, then believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved! If you have any questions about salvation, please feel free to ask us. Or, you can visit our Got Eternal Life page.

Question: "What if I don't feel saved?"

Answer: This is an all-too-common question among Christians. Many people doubt their salvation because of feelings or the lack of them. The Bible has much to say about salvation, but nothing to say about "feeling saved." Salvation is a process by which the sinner is delivered from "wrath," that is, from God's judgment against sin (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9). Specifically, it was Jesus' death on the cross and subsequent resurrection that achieved our salvation (Romans 5:10; Ephesians 1:7).

Our part in the salvation process is that we are saved by faith. First, we must hear the gospel—the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection (Ephesians 1:13). Then, we must believe—fully trust the Lord Jesus (Romans 1:16) and His sacrifice alone. We have no confidence in works of the flesh to achieve salvation. This faith—which is a gift from God, not something we produce on our own (Ephesians 2:8-9)—involves repentance, a changing of mind about sin and Christ (Acts 3:19), and calling on the name of the Lord (Romans 10:9-10, 13). Salvation results in a changed life as we begin to live as the new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17).

We live in a feeling-oriented society and, sadly, that has spilled over into the church. But feelings are unreliable. Emotions are untrustworthy. They ebb and flow like the tides of the sea that bring in all kinds of seaweed and debris and deposit them on the shore, then go back out, eroding the ground we stand on and washing it out to sea. Such is the state of those whose emotions rule their lives. The simplest circumstances—a headache, a cloudy day, a word thoughtlessly spoken by a friend—can erode our confidence and send us "out to sea" in a fit of despair. Doubt and discouragement, particularly about the Christian life, are the inevitable result of trying to interpret our feelings as though they were truth. They are not.

But the Christian who is forewarned and well-armed is a person not governed by feelings but by the truth he knows. He does not rely on his feelings to prove anything to him. Relying on feelings is precisely the error most people make in life. They are so introspective that they become preoccupied with themselves, constantly analyzing their own feelings. These are those who are continually questioning their relationship with God. “Do I really love God?” “Does He really love me?” “Am I good enough?” What we really need to do is stop thinking about ourselves and focusing on our feelings and redirect our focus to God and the truth we know about Him from His Word.

When we are controlled by subjective feelings centered on ourselves rather than by objective truth centered on God, we live in a constant state of defeat. Objective truth centers on the great doctrines of the faith and their relevance to life: the sovereignty of God, the high-priestly intercession of Christ, the promise of the Holy Spirit, and the hope of eternal glory. Understanding these great truths, centering our thoughts on them, and rehearsing them in our minds will enable us to reason from truth in all of life’s trials, and our faith will be strong and vital. Reasoning from what we *feel* about ourselves—rather than what we *know* about God—is the sure path to spiritual defeat. The Christian life is one of death to self and rising to “walk in the newness of life” (Romans 6:4), and that new life is characterized by thoughts about Him who saved us, not thoughts about the feelings of the dead flesh that has been crucified with Christ. When we are continually thinking about ourselves and our feelings, we are essentially obsessing about a corpse, full of rotteness and death.

God promised to save us if we come to Him in faith. He never promised that we would *feel* saved.

These questions and responses are modified from Gotquestions.com